

**“MIXING MEMORY AND DESIRE”:
FORM, IDEOLOGY, AND SEAN O’FAOLAIN’S
POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRELAND***

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Abstract

This essay considers Sean O’Faolain’s intense interest in memory in his short stories on post-revolutionary Ireland. Neutral in classical storytelling, which anticipated the Irish short story, memory is ideological in O’Faolain’s writing since it is fraught with a desire for little narratives on national identity as an alternative to the hegemonic notion of an Irish Ireland. This yearning is first articulated as a nostalgia for a unified nation in the context of a postlapsarian Ireland where normalization leads to the vulgarization of national identity. However, it gradually shifts to a problematics of memory when boredom is the governing principle of the national life, and ultimately becomes a parable of the dilemma of a modern writer

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engaged in unraveling the foreignness of the Irish character by dramatizing the failure of memory and storytelling. In his last work he recurses to quasi-autobiography to illustrate the productivity of memory's failure: With his faulty memory, the autobiographer, and his twin, the storyteller, is probably the most necessary liar to recuperate the hidden part of the Irish nature residing in the thinness of Irish life.

Key Words: form, ideology, Sean O'Faolain, post-revolutionary Ireland

In a 1934 essay entitled "The Emancipation of Irish Writers" Sean O'Faolain writes: "Irish literature . . . has always been seeking escapes from the shattering of its ideals" (497). Epitomizing the general aspiration for artistic integrity among Irish writers, this statement calls attention to the (post)colonial Irish condition which, marred by the "boisterous presence of politics" (Eagleton 299), is most inimical to its fulfillment. It is not surprising, therefore, that fetishizing the past - a form of escape from history readily available to the oppressed when exile is not an option - prevails in the Irish experience as well as in art. In view of this preoccupation with the past, I will contend, O'Faolain deviates from dominant ideals of a homogeneous nation even though he partakes of the general interest in storytelling and the official privilege of the short story to aestheticize the Irish life. While cases have been made to support or repudiate the legacy of storytelling for the Irish short story,¹ my concern is less with the formal continuity between these two genres, or its absence thereof, than with O'Faolain's intense interest in memory which, essential to and supposedly neutral in classical storytelling, is ideological in that it is always fraught with a desire for little narratives on national

¹ See, for instance, Pierce Butler, *Sean O'Faolain: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne, 1993), xii; Vivian Mercier, "The Irish Short Story and Oral Tradition," *The Celtic Cross: Studies in Irish Culture and Literature*, eds. Ray B. Browne et al. (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1964), pp. 98-116; Deborah M. Averil, *The Irish Short Story from George Moore to Frank O'Connor* (Lanham: the University Press of America, 1982), p. 21; Patrick Rafroidi and Terence Brown, eds., *The Irish Short Story* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1979), pp. 14-15; James F. Kilroy, "Introduction," *The Irish Short Story: A Critical History*, ed. James F. Kilroy (Boston: Twayne, 1984), pp. 1-19.

identity as an alternative to the hegemonic notion of an Irish Ireland. This yearning, I will contend, is defined variously in O'Faolain's lifelong commitment to transcribe post-independent Ireland. In the early stage of his writing, it is articulated, through narrators reminiscent of storytellers, as a nostalgia for a unified nation in the context of a postlapsarian Ireland where normalization leads to the vulgarization of national identity, but gradually shifts to a problematic of memory at a time when boredom is the governing principle of the national life, and ultimately becomes a parable of the dilemma of a modern writer engaged in unraveling the foreignness of the Irish character by dramatizing the failure of memory and storytelling. Given O'Faolain's obsession with memory, it may not be a coincidence that he recurses to quasi-autobiography in his last work to illustrate the productivity of memory's failure: With his faulty memory the autobiographer, and his twin, the storyteller, is probably the most necessary liar to recuperate the hidden part of the Irish nature residing in the thinness of Irish life (Brown 1979, 574).

Normalcy and Its Discontent

In contrast to the general belief that power is unilateral and obtained through violence, Antonio Gramsci contends that hegemony involves the ruler and the ruled alike, and congeals through the double mechanism of the former's coercion and the latter's consent.² Power, in other words, consolidates when,

² Hegemony has carried quite a different significance from what it means nowadays. For an account of such a shift, see Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 27.

and only when, the ruler's values are internalized as "natural" by the ruled. In the case of Ireland, imperial rule has been exercised through "civil society" - institutions ranging from family, school, church, to culture - to produce loyal British subjects. While most Irish people accept the English world picture as their own, consent rarely goes without dissent, as is revealed in the term "west Briton," a label the Irish people attached to conformists to articulate their disapproval of their compatriots' failure to resist colonial coercion. Nor were "west Britons" as homogeneous as this term suggests. In fact, their consent to imperial values has been "compliant and contumacious together," combining "official" beliefs with subversive ones (Eagleton 31), thus rendering hegemony open to power reversal, as is well suggested in Homi Bhabha's analysis of "mimic man," who is "almost the same [as the ruler] but not quite" (126).

O'Faolain's growth is a perfect exemplar of such an intricate relation between coercion and consent in the context of late colonial Ireland. The beginning of the twentieth century saw the prolonged birth pang of Ireland before she transformed into a newly-born nation in 1922, a historical moment coinciding with O'Faolain's birth. Sean O'Faolain was born John Whelan in 1900 to a pious Catholic woman and a humble Cork policeman of the Royal Irish Constabulary. As a boy growing up in Cork, he was unaware of Ireland as an emerging nation engaged in a long-term struggle for political autonomy: Ireland, in other words, was "not there" for him (O'Faolain 1976, 11). Instead, his heroes were fictional and historical Englishmen, and, like his father, he was proud of any Irishman who could establish himself in the English world

picture. Indeed, so unreserved was the Irish consent to the imperial version of normalcy that when the Easter Rising occurred in Dublin in 1916, O'Faolain's first response was not much different from his father's and most of his fellow countrymen's, a feeling that a few Irishmen were disgracing Ireland in public. But as Michel Foucault suggests, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (95). For embedded in the ruler's hegemony is the counter-hegemony of Irish nationalism which, with its coercion in the form of sublime blood sacrifice culminating in the Easter Rising - a manifestation of political violence as well as "demonstration politics" (Townsend 312) - came to struggle for the civil consent, including O'Faolain's: As the rebels held out against the British Army at the cost of their own lives, he felt his deep-rooted beliefs shattering (O'Faolain 1964, 131) and rebellious thought burgeoning.

Terry Eagleton suggests that the British Empire failed in its hegemonic role in Ireland because, with a policy vacillating between shutting the populace out and seeking to integrate them, it eventually excluded the mass of the people from the state (73). By contrast, Irish nationalism finally secured its power to establish a nation state in 1922 precisely because it had already won the battle for hegemony, or what Gramsci calls the "war of position," before its "war of manoeuvre" (238-9) against the Empire (Eagleton 97), by including the Catholic rural populace. Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association of the Act of Union in the second half of nineteenth century, for instance, was populist in its appeal, often attracting hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in his "monster gatherings." His Catholic Emancipation also sought to include the populace in its campaign. But the most far-reaching aspect of Irish

nationalism was the Irish Revivals in the 1850’s and 1890’s, which aimed at the retrieval and preservation of the Irish past arbitrarily defined as Celtic or Gaelic. Elitist by nature, these two waves of cultural nationalism nevertheless won the consent of the Catholic majority by virtue of their appeal to its rural backgrounds. At the advocacy of the Gaelic League (founded by Douglas Hyde in 1893 to promote an interest in Gaelic), a “nursery” for active members of Sinn Fein (“Ourselves Together”) and the Irish Volunteers of 1916 (Brown 1985, 39), the re-circulation of the mother tongue became a cultural imperative after the Easter Rising.

It is in this context that O’Faolain studied the Irish language in the “Free Country” in 1917 (O’Faolain 1963, 138), and converted his name to the Irish version, Sean O’Faolain, thereby pledging his consent to Irish nationalism. In the same year, he made his first pilgrimage to Cougane Barra, and became an Irish Volunteer, the precursor of Irish Republicans. He further served in the Irish Republican Army during War of Independence with Britain (1919-21), and worked as propagandist and publicity director for republican forces during the Irish Civil War (1921-23). In his fervent embrace of Irish Republicanism, he became a disciple of Daniel Corkery, a Cork elementary school teacher whose discourses on an Irish Ireland, congenial with the ideology of the Gaelic League and Irish Republicanism, were to trigger a “crisis of hegemony” (Gramsci 210) in independent Ireland.

It turns out that Irish cultural nationalism, whose effects were the most profound of all forms of Irish nationalism, was initiated by a group of elitists from the Ascendancy, a class whose political and religious ideology had long been held

suspect by the Catholic majority. This suspicion was not totally ungrounded: The Ascendancy was an “egregious failure” as a ruling class (Eagleton 31) in that it failed to be rooted in and identified with native culture (Eagleton 59-60). Culture, in the situation of the second-wave Irish Revival, became the alternative disinterested ground for the Ascendancy to fulfill its dream of what W. B. Yeats called “Unity of [the Irish] Image” (180). The translation of Gaelic texts and the writing on the indigenous, two primary projects on the cultural nationalist agenda, thus, among other things, became a belated act of hegemony to integrate the ruling class into the ruled. What seemed to be sublime good will and self-sacrifice on the part of the Ascendancy, in this light, became devious “political opportunism” (Eagleton 103), a failed opportunism though, because the ideal of a Gaelic, Catholic Ireland, vocalized by Daniel Corkery, was to supersede its hegemonic role to become the foundation of state policies.

In *The Hidden Ireland*, Corkery aspires to uncover “the Hidden Ireland of the Gaels” (Corkery 1924, 19), which he posits as “the Irish Ireland” (Corkery 1924, 36), by privileging the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for its representation of the peasantry. While this preference for nativism coincides with the Anglo-Irish nationalist agenda, it is laden with a Republican ideology in its sideward glance to the Civil War in the early 1920’s generated from the dissent of Protestant northern Ireland to join the Irish Free State. The exclusivist nature of Corkery’s imagination of Ireland as a nation state is salient in *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature*. In this book, Corkery condemns Anglo-Irish literature produced by the revivalists as colonial, and hence “abnormal,” because it

lives and dies by the judgment of non-Irish critics, in contrast to a “normal” and national literature which he defines as exclusively Gaelic (Corkery 1931, 3-6). Under the guise of a prescription for a populist national literature, Corkery’s “normalcy” quite easily replaced the revivalists’ “unity” to become the cornerstone of hegemony in the new state. His view reverberated in the discourse of Professor Timothy Corcoran, an influential figure in the government’s cultural policies:

The Irish nation is the Gaelic nation; its language and literature is the Gaelic language; its history is the history of the Gael. All other elements have no place in Irish national life, literature and tradition, save as far as they are assimilated into the very substance of Gaelic speech, life and thought. (qtd. in Brown 1985, 63)

Coinciding with the ideology of the dominant party, Fianna Fail (the “Republican Party”), which privileged Gaelic-Romantic intensity over Irish-Enlightenment propriety (Prager 208), Corkery’s notion was in great currency in state cultural policies, and was fully embraced by Eamon De Valera’s government, which adopted Gaelic as the official language with compulsory measures built into the educational system and proficiency in the “national language” made mandatory for a wide variety of state employments (Foster 518), and granted subsidies exclusively to writers in Gaelic in the 1930’s.

In its attempt to consolidate a national identity distinct from the Anglo-Irish minority-other, Corkery’s “normalcy” runs the risk of cultural parochialism since, to secure its power, it would have to operate through the Catholic Church, one of

the most important and conservative institutions of civil society in Ireland. The fruit of the marriage between nationalism and Catholicism was the passing of the Censorship of Films Act of 1923 and the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929, and the 1925 motion that made divorce legislation impossible. In an era when self-sufficient Irish independence was the national imperative, the civil consent to normalcy was so encompassing that no supporters of the Irish Ireland movement questioned why the revolutionary humanism that generated this movement should lead to such a reactionary practice as censorship (Brown 1985, 58). What is more, under the pressure of business to meet the heavy demand for nationalist and moral assumptions, the Censorship Board made judgment on suspicious works on the mere basis of offensive passages marked by Customs officials rather than on consideration of the general tendency of these works (Brown 1985, 115). In consequence, about 1,200 books and 140 periodicals were banned as obscene - an offense interchangeable with a lack of national authenticity or will (Brown 1985, 58) - in the 1930's, many of which were modern classics, including O'Faolain's *Midsummer Night Madness* (1932) and *Bird Alone* (1936).

Identifying normalcy with moral and nationalist codes, and operating in a rigid procedure to eliminate the "abnormal" elements, the consolidation of the independent state's hegemony testifies to the process of nation-building, the second stage in Anthony Smith's cycle of nationalism. Nationalism, suggests Smith, usually veers between anarchism and elitism. It begins with an aspiration to liberate the cultural nation from the oppression of a bureaucratic, centralized machine run by an unrepresentative elite. By securing the homeland as a

recognized territorial unit to be the rightful home of the people, it hopes to end the people's sense of "homelessness." Ironically, such a liberating impulse has to be curbed in the course of nation-building, a task requiring an adequate central authority with sufficient powers and skills in order to extend the scope and efficiency of the bureaucratic machine. As a consequence, the disillusion and resentment of intelligentsia characterizes the third stage of nationalism, as bureaucratic control becomes more and more mechanistic and centralized, leading to the depersonalization of society and alienation of people and, in some cases, re-triggering the national longing for home (Smith 180-1).

Anthony Smith's analysis of nationalism sheds light on O'Faolain's seemingly unexpected disenchantment by an ideal he fervently embraced, a disillusion which began shortly after the conclusion of the Irish Civil War in 1923. In adopting the new technology of governmental bureaucracies in order to accentuate the ideas of normality, the Irish Free State, like other "scientific" states, ran into the pitfall of ahistoricism (Smith 175), having little sense of the historic negotiations between classes, religions and ethnic groups. The privileging of Gaelicism to the exclusion of the Anglo-Irish elites who contributed significantly to the nationalist cause, in this regard, signals not only a betrayal of the emancipating ideal with which Irish nationalism began, but also a self-contradiction since it belies the nation-state's impulse for modernization. As a consequence, Irish nationalism lapsed into "egoism," as O'Faolain was to put it in *The Irish: A Character Study*, or "the exaggeration of Irish virtues - our stubbornness, conservatism, enormous arrogance, our power of resistance . . . devotion to

the past . . .” (O’Faolain 1949, 172). Given the egoistic inclination of nationalism, the home the independent state promised to restore was nothing but a dreary Eden - “not dead, but sleeping” (O’Faolain 1957, x) - epitomized by O’Faolain’s birthplace, Cork, a provincial town both inspiring for its natural beauty and yet dispiriting for its “lean long suffocating *clausuras* of seclusion, smugness and security, images of the mental suffocation and total resistance to all new idea of my city’s damp, dark, miasmatic valley” (O’Faolain 1963, 154-5). As home suggested to O’Faolain paralyzing stagnation for all its loveliness, he regained a sense of homelessness in his homeland, and began to seek exile.

It is thus not a surprise that in 1926 O’Faolain went to Harvard University to pursue an M. A. in comparative philology on a scholarship provided by the English government - a significant gesture of revolt from a former Irish Republican - and launched his career as a college teacher and writer in Boston and England. While exile-emigration was a form of escape from the oppressive Irish cultural climate and economic stagnancy most often adopted by his fellow countrymen, it was at best one of two options for O’Faolain, torn as he was between a love for Ireland and “a longing to get out of it” (O’Faolain 1963, 366). Having put himself in exile for seven years, he decided to terminate it to stay permanently in Ireland one year after he was elected to the Irish Academy of Letters in 1932, ironically the same year his first collection of short stories was banned in Ireland. On the eve of his return, he received an anonymous letter which, with special reference to his banned work, was the epitome of the dominant nationalist-purist ideology of his country: “No detractor of Ireland’s fair name

must whine because we Irish must clean our house after dirty little dogs like you have dropped your filth on our clean carpet, as a pup is whipped so shall you be” (O’Faolain 1963, 342). Infuriated and humiliated by the ban on his first book, O’Faolain had felt frightened by his imminent return to live with “these stupid, boorish, dispirited people” who denounced him (O’Faolain 1963, 340), but determined that he was not going to be driven out of his motherland after he read this venomous letter: “It was when a fog lifts suddenly from a battlefield and one can with clear eyes deploy for the fight” (O’Faolain 1963, 342). To launch this liberation struggle against the hegemony of Irish asexual moralism-nationalism,³ he deployed several literary forms to articulate his dissent, including novel, critical essay, biography, and, primarily, short story.⁴

³ O’Faolain was not the only Irish writer to engage in this war; Liam O’Flaherty and Frank O’Connor were his friends as well as allies. Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 119.

⁴ O’Faolain founded *The Bell* in 1940 and edited it from 1940 through 1946 to mouth his critique of cultural isolationism that the Irish Free State government took over from Daniel Corkery. He also wrote biographies to achieve this end. *King of the Beggars*, for instance, repudiates Corkery’s privilege of the peasant as the Irish subject by positing Daniel O’Connell as the epitome of the Irish character: “In body and soul, origin and life, in his ways and his words, he was the epitome of all their [Irishmen’s] pride, passion, surge, and hope - their very essence.” Sean O’Faolain, *King of the Beggars: A Life of Daniel O’Connell* (New York: Viking, 1938), p. 138. His novel *A Nest of Simple Folk*, on its part, is the genealogy of a prospective rebel, Denis Hussey, who, like the young O’Faolain, is to shed his father’s influence in sympathy to the cause of his grand-uncle, Leo Donell, a peasant-turned rebel, on the eve of the Easter Rising. Sean O’Faolain, *A Nest of Simple Folk*, first published in 1933 (New York: Birch Lane, 1990).

Not incidentally, the short story was one of the dominant genres in post-revolutionary Irish literature by virtue of its kinship with storytelling, an oral tradition associated with the peasantry. In this regard, Irish short story writers partook of the revivalists' enthusiasm for cultural heritage, even though they diverged from their precursors' privileging of poetry and drama as staple genres, by looking to the Gaelic folk tradition for inspiration. Especially of interest to them were the *seanchaí*, who told stories about familiar places, family genealogies, fairies and ghosts "as if he himself had witnessed it," and the *sgéalaí*, who narrated adventures and wonders neutrally in the third person (Kiberd 15-16). However, unlike storytelling, which flourished in pre-modern rural society untouched by advanced technology (Benjamin 91), the short story is potentially Janus-faced, looking toward the past as well as the future. As Declan Kiberd aptly observes, the rise of the Irish short story is "the natural result of a fusion between the ancient form of the folk-tale and the preoccupations of modern literature" (Kiberd 14). From the perspective of power shift, this hybrid literary form prevailed in the struggle for hegemony precisely because it was affiliated to the peasant-turned tradesmen and the farmers, two classes most influential in fashioning the cultural mold of the independent state (Brown 1985, 23). It is not a surprise, therefore, that the Irish short story has been pioneered by the "risen people," or the emerging Catholic bourgeoisie who hailed from regional towns where the

For more comprehensive analyses of O'Faolain's longer works and commentaries, see Maurice Harmon, *Sean O'Faolain*, rev. ed. (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1984); Paul Doyle, *Sean O'Faolain* (New York: Twayne, 1968); Richard Bonaccorso, *Sean O'Faolain's Irish Vision* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987).

force of storytelling was still powerful (Kiberd 15).

It is to be noted, however, that within this seemingly homogeneous genre there is a spectrum of positions in relation to its oral predecessor. Storytelling, contends Walter Benjamin in "The Storyteller," requires a specific bond between the storyteller and his listener. This bond is based on an asymmetrical relationship. For to tell a story is to reveal one's personality: The storyteller, like a sage, invariably provides counsel upon conclusion of his tale which draws on his own experience. The listener, on his part, absorbs the tale with an intensity not unlike that of a viewer of a work of art. In other words, centralistic in its demand on the listener's absorption, the story is endowed with an aura, or the "unique manifestation of a distance" (Benjamin 188) conjured by a nostalgia for the past and the experience (Benjamin 239) analogous to that of a work of art. Its chances for survival in modern times are greatly reduced by "information" (Benjamin 88), a new form of communication which provides the masses with distractive sounds and/or images, much as the work of art yields its place to its imitations in the age of mechanical reproduction. In this view, the decline of storytelling can be considered an indicator of modernity. And herein lies the possible dilemma of the Irish short story which, as is mentioned, aspires to rejuvenate the spirit of the nation by looking to cultural heritage. In his construct of national identity, Daniel Corkery politicizes the Irish rural past by investing it with a nationalistic-moralistic aura in the name of normalcy. Fundamentalist in retaining the form and content of storytelling, his short stories primarily romanticize the peasantry and revolutionary ideals, as is revealed in *Hounds of Banba*, and thus run into the pitfall of

romantic anachronism incongruous with the author's nationalist intent to modernize the nation through discourse. O'Faolain, by contrast, shares his mentor's faith in the Irish legacy, but refuses Corkery's attempt to regulate Irish society into a homogenous, backward-looking community to the suppression of the darker side of the Irish condition. Instead, he looks toward the future, an aim to be achieved only by honestly confronting the present, especially the "cheap" and "ugly" aspects of the Irish life romanticized as the national dream:

Whenever you see something fine that any of our people are doing anywhere tell us about it. Whenever you see anybody creating something cheap and ugly, and a large number of people being deluded by him, tell them and tell us about it. Only in that way can we build up real standards worthy of our dreams about a great, modern Ireland. (O'Faolain 1941, 10-11)

For O'Faolain, this undesirable side of the national experience is boredom, another name for inertia or what James Joyce would have called "paralysis," induced by the state bureaucracy intent on normalizing Ireland into a homogeneous nation-state to the erasure of individual difference, leading to xenophobic provincialism which both alienates the people by divesting them of a satisfactory life experience and hinders Ireland's progress towards a liberal, modern state. In this light, O'Faolain might have a different reason from Corkery's in his privileging of the short story. For it happens that boredom, which characterizes pre-modern rural life, is the origin of storytelling which, in turn, generates the Irish short story: "Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the experience [which generates storytelling]. . . . His

nesting places . . . are already extinct in the cities and are declining in the country as well. . . . It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to" (Benjamin 91). Boredom as a symptom of country life, in this case, is neutral, but takes on political significances when it is transposed to the Irish short story. While Corkery normalizes boredom in his short stories into an "authentic" experience of revolution, which was launched in the name of the peasantry, O'Faolain sees in boredom not only aesthetic potential, but also abnormally stifling social reality to be accounted for at a time when the very notion of normality has been shattered by revolutionary upheavals.⁵ Therefore, in lieu of unreflectively clinging to the "yawning boredom" consequent upon the constant repetition of "over-familiar peasant motifs" (O'Faolain 1949, 174), O'Faolain makes an anatomy of boredom by constructing "little narratives" (Lyotard 294-5) on the "submerged population group" (O'Connor 18) to dismantle the slippage of normality celebrated by the grand narrative.

The Madness of Normality

"The law is mad," suggests Terry Eagleton in his reading of Edmund Burke, "but is normally kept safely incarcerated in the prison-house of hegemony" (53). In the context of modern Ireland, such madness can be translated as an unreflective passion for revolutionary ideals which verges on juvenile wishful

⁵ Frank O'Connor also suggests that "without the concept of a normal society the novel is impossible," whereas abnormality is the order of things in the short story. *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (London: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 17-18.

thinking, much as O'Faolain criticizes Corkery's collection of short stories on the Irish revolution: "We loved *The Hounds of Banba*, stories of Irish revolution, as long as we were elated by being young revolutionaries ourselves, but the more we saw of revolution the less we liked Corkery's lyric, romantic, idea of revolution and revolutionaries" (O'Faolain 1936, 52). Indeed a close analysis of "Midsummer Night Madness," the title story of O'Faolain's first and banned work, will testify to the madness of the hegemonic impulse for normality embodied in fanatic nationalism in revolutionary Ireland. In it, he posits his fictional self, John, as the narrator to bear testimony to the constricting narrow-mindedness of Irish Republicanism. An idealistic young revolutionary, not unlike O'Faolain in his early twenties, John is sent out of Cork to censor Stevey Long, a local IRA commandant, who has been inactive with his responsibilities in the past four months. This mission, however, turns out to be a rite of initiation into "the self-absorbed and self-induced madness" (Hildebidle 137) of revolutionary idealism. In Stevey's headquarters, the Gothic Red House owned by the Protestant landowner Alexander Henn, John discovers why Stevey has been tardy with his duties: The commandant is infatuated by Gypsy Gamble, a tinker girl Henn is also intimate with, to the negligence of his task of restraining the nightly excursions of the Tans, members of the Royal Irish Constabulary sent to Ireland to suppress the Sinn Fein rebellion of 1919-21. Upon learning that Gypsy is pregnant, Stevey denounces Henn as the culprit, even though he himself might equally be the candidate for such a sin of impurity. To rectify Henn's "wrongdoing," Stevey rallies his men, burns the Blakes' house across the valley as a warning, and threatens Henn with

the same fate if he refuses to marry Gypsy. The story concludes with the narrator's account of the ill-matched couple, now married, leaving Cork by train for Paris.

By ventriloquizing through John, whose experience overlaps significantly with his own, Sean O'Faolain vicariously partakes of the role of the storyteller, except that he appropriates the oral tradition to unveil the aura of the grand narrative of normalcy which generates John's tale. As a revolutionary from tenant stock, John is indoctrinated to condemn "Mad Henn" as the fearful lunatic who chased children for no cause, as "one of the class that had battered for too long on [Irish] poor people," and morally objectionable as a "Juan in old age" (O'Faolain 1932, 12). Stevey, on his part, is an even more fundamentalist epitome of Irish Republicanism - nativistic, Catholic, and at its worst, chauvinistic. He obviously makes himself too much at home in his enemy's castle by ordering the former landowner about, much to Henn's chagrin. In his jealous guarding of Gypsy's chastity against his enemy, however, Stevey betrays the incoherence of his grand narrative. For one thing, he should know better than anyone else that Gypsy is promiscuous, for, not knowing who sires the child she is expecting, as Henn suggests (O'Faolain 1932, 36), she may have slept with him too. By bullying Henn into marrying Gypsy, he ostensibly serves only one master - Catholicism - but actually revenges himself on his native of a lover for her backsliding with an unidentifiable enemy whom he unwarrantedly targets as Henn, an enemy he is supposed to direct at the Tans, his primary enemies.

Perhaps John's saving grace, which lifts him from Stevey's midsummer night madness in the name of nationalism-moralism,

lies in the more salubrious aspect of nativism. Like the *seanchai*, who had a keen sense of place (Butler 60), John is highly receptive to the “May-month sweetness” of Cork, especially after months of nerve-breaking vigilance “among the backyards”:

Fallen hawthorn blossoms splashed with their lime the dust of the road, and so narrow were the boreens in places that the lilac and the dog-rose, hung with wisps of hay, reached down as if to be plucked, and under the overhanging trees I could smell the pungent smell of the laurel sweating in the damp night-air. (O’Faolain 1932, 9)

Ironically, it is this love for the native land that opens John’s eyes to the hidden part of Henn, supposedly the IRA’s secondary enemy both by class and by religion. Indeed, the disreputable image of Henn as a lecherous oppressor gradually disintegrates when John meets him at the Red House. In spite of his degenerate condition as a downtrodden old man, much as his Big House has become dilapidated for lack of maintenance for fifty years, Henn still retains vestiges of his former status as a gentleman: He wears a bowler hat, speaks with a cultured accent, and insists on the observance of decorum. Curiously enough, instead of arousing John’s hostility, his discontent with the “new patriots” (O’Faolain 1932, 20) for their lack of manners reminds John of his own importune intrusion. His account of his previous effort in helping tenants with loans and advice and his plan to revitalize the Irish economy further reveal his ideals for Ireland, indeed, ideals not too far from those of his plebian compatriots. With such a compassion for his people, he invites John to stay - not only because he finds John more cultured,

but also because John's parents used to be his tenants. Compounded by his culture, this compassion allows him to appreciate the muscular beauty of country women (O'Faolain 1932, 24) like Gypsy, and aspires for the manufacture of fine silk to beautify them. In his appreciation of the native woman's beauty almost as miracles of nature ("Breast like tulips. Lovely! Lovely!"), Henn is quite different from the vulgar Stevey, who is blind to the nuance of Gypsy's physical attraction except her "great titties" (O'Faolain 1932, 18). Another dimension in the gossip surrounding his alleged debauchery emerges when John, waken up by the record music of *Don Giovanni* Henn plays at midnight, follows his host to Gypsy's cottage, and peers through a window at the secretive tryst between the half-naked Gypsy and her decrepit lover. While John finds distasteful Stevey's bold dalliance with Gypsy in his presence during the day, he is much moved by the old libertine's tender attempt to comfort the tearful and obviously pregnant Gypsy ("those drooping mother's breasts and that large mother's belly on the young girl") (O'Faolain 1932, 32) who, as he learns later, is to bear a child in a month with no prospect of imminent marriage ("And who else would have me now? Since others won't - others that have their own life and their own plans and plots") (O'Faolain 1932, 42). Indeed John has to walk away because he cannot bear the sight of human suffering, in comparison with which "country and freedom seemed a small thing" (O'Faolain 1932, 32).

In his capacity for compassion, John is Henn's cultural kin although they are otherwise a world apart. This may explain why his sympathy turns to his "enemy" when he realizes that it is Stevey who burns the Blakes' house in retaliation for Henn's

alleged sully of Gypsy's chastity. Henn, indeed, is "Juan in old age," since his gallantry is pathetically heroic in John's eyes when the "Olympian among the Irish rebels" (Davenport 315) takes great pains to cater to the needs of the Blakes who reluctantly seek refuge in his ruined hall, regardless of Stevey's threat to burn his house as well if he refuses to claim Gypsy. Even though he manages to swallow his humiliation and takes the forced marriage much better than John does, by simply-mindedly congratulating himself on the prospect of keeping his family name alive ("As if he were a Hapsburg or a Bourbon!" [commented John.]) (O'Faolain 1932, 43), he may well nigh be "Juan in hell" (O'Faolain 1932, 34) in John's view. As John puts it in his account of the ill-matched couple's departure for Paris, he finds it too painful to envision Henn guiding his tinker wife through Paris, a city alive with lovely women and merry men in their prime: "Life is too pitiful in these recapturings of the *temps perdu*, these brief intervals of reality" (O'Faolain 1932, 43). Unable to be verified since the story concludes here, this comment can be better understood as a privatized ending of storytelling: Reminiscent of the counsel provided by the classical storyteller, it reveals not only John's nostalgia for a holistic, old Ireland which Henn stands for, but also O'Faolain's reflection on memory, a faculty closely associated with storytelling.

And herein lies O'Faolain's lover's quarrel with the ideal of an Irish Ireland, which he himself embraced as a young man, but which he later repudiated upon realizing how such an ideal led to oppressive regulatory measures when it secured power in the new state. He shares with Corkery a yearning for the Irish past, but refuses to believe that this past is unitary in origin, that is, Gaelic and Catholic to the erasure of the historic negotiations

among different cultural components. Instead, he is convinced that the Irish character is of multiple origins from which five representative types have branched: the peasantry (who later developed into the new bourgeoisie), the Anglo-Irish, the rebels, the priests, and the writers (O'Faolain 1949, ix-x). The real and only Ireland, therefore, is anything but homogeneous. Rather, it is a Catholic, English-speaking, democratic, petit-bourgeois world beleaguered by fanaticism and doctrines "bred of a romantic version of Irish history" (Brown 1979, 572). As is revealed in "Midsummer Night Madness," Stevey's revenge on the "mad" Henn for the rape of Ireland, symbolized by Gypsy's rape (Hanson 96), is itself an act of madness, not only because Gypsy-Ireland is promiscuous-hybrid in the first place, but because he himself might have been responsible for her fall. As revolutionary ideals not only fail to invigorate the young revolutionaries (John and Stevey seem very much bored by their tasks) but disrupt pre-revolutionary "normality" achieved by a harmonious relation among diverse cultural groups, there is little wonder that it is with an Anglo-Irish landowner, rather than the peasant, that the aura of an Edenic Ireland, however pathetic and tentative, is endowed.

If "Cathleen ni Houlihan" embodied by Stevey is the "divine appointed spiritual plumber" (qtd. in Kilroy 128) which erodes this aura, O'Faolain is to locate the Catholic Church as another oppressive "authority structure" (Norris 40) in "The Man Who Invented Sin." Set in 1920, this story pivots on five young people - Sister Magdalen, Sister Crysostom, Brother Majellan, Brother Virgilius, and the narrator - who go to a remote mountain village to learn Irish, as most historical Irish young people did to partake of the general zeal for native

culture promoted by the Gaelic League. As the narrator knows them better, these four religious prove to be heterogeneous in character even though they have the same vocation. Sister Magdalen, for instance, is too dainty and gay to be a nun. Sister Crysostom, on her part, is a prim. Brother Virgilius is an athletic countryman who may make a better farmer than a teacher. Brother Majellan is an intelligent gentleman. Like most young men involved in a joint activity, they quickly make good friends with one another. Brother Virgilius and Sister Crysostom soon address each other with terms of endearment when they realize that they come from the same part of the country, as do Brother Majellan and Sister Magdalen, who seem to fall in love. With their intimacy and youthful vigor, they turn their patriotic excursion into a good time by entertaining themselves with pitch-and-toss games and night parties. As the narrator suggests, their merriment in the reclusive countryside is not unlike children playing in the Garden of Eden, and their quarrel, non-spiteful: "When monks and nuns quarrel, they seem to be astonished and shocked rather than angry: like children who have bumped against a door or a calf who has tried his first nettle. Grown men would have ended it with a curse or a clout" (O'Faolain 1948, 10).

Their merry-making, however, greatly annoys Lispeen, the local curate. In anger Lispeen bursts into one of the night parties to chide the young people and, when confronted by Majellan for his rude language with the sisters, walks away threatening to report them to their Superior. Probably thanks to the good office of the landlord and the parish priest, nothing catastrophic happens afterwards, except that the story spreads, and the students gather around the four religious to give them

moral support. In the end, more young people join the gang’s regular concerts in the garden. The four even begin to go out on surreptitious boating parties. As the narrator recalls, this unexpected turn of the religious’ consciences is induced by the Serpent, or boredom induced by the fundamentalist observance of moral-nationalist codes of conduct, who comes to their Garden of Eden to tempt them. They swallow “the last morsel of their apple” (O’Faolain 1948, 13) the night before they are due to return home by going out on a boating excursion. Just as the boat veers toward the shore after a merry night out, they are aghast to find that Lispeen is awaiting them on the causeway. The four religious frantically disguise themselves by removing parts of clothing that will readily divulge their identity, and disperse under their companions’ cover as soon as the boat comes to the landing-place. Still, Lispeen manages to find a nun’s guimp on the stones, and would have made a scene with it if he were not hoaxed to answer a sick-call that the narrator sends with the purpose of stealing the guimp.

The aura surrounding the narrator’s reverie of youthful innocence, however, is ruthlessly dispelled as this memory is juxtaposed with Majellan’s and Lispeen’s twenty-three years later when the oppressive effects of nationalism-bred hegemony are felt in independent Ireland. In response to the narrator’s nostalgia for things past (“Great days! But nobody wants to learn the language now. The mountains are empty”), Majellan, of all people, shocks his interlocutor with a negative retrospect: “But it’s not good to take people out of their rut. I didn’t enjoy that summer” (O’Faolain 1948, 17).⁶ This shock is reinforced

⁶ Despite the government’s attempt to elevate Gaelic to the status of the

two hours later when the narrator encounters Lispeen, who laughs at the memory of the old days: “Of course, you know . . . they were only children. Such innocents! . . . Of course, I had to frighten them!” (O’Faolain 1948, 18). Despite Lispeen’s expressed indulgence for the innocent youths, the last impression he leaves with the narrator inadvertently restores him to the context of the memory he shares with the narrator: “He [Lispeen] bowed benevolently to every respectful salute along the glowing street, and when he did his elongated shadow *waved behind him like a tail*” (O’Faolain 1948, 18; italics mine). After all, he remains the oppressive Snake to the children of an Edenic Ireland which, paradoxically, he is supposed to guard, or so the grand narrative insists. With this little narrative so which can be understood as an allegory of Ireland’s fall from a spontaneously moral nation-state to a dreary Eden with its hegemonic impulse for homogeneity, O’Faolain seems to suggest that memory operates like discourse, as it is open to revisions and corrections.

Desire in Memory

For O’Faolain, what makes memory revisable is desire, as the narrator of the title story in *I Remember! I Remember!* remarks: “I believe that in every decisive moment of our lives the spur to action comes from that part of the memory where desire lies dozing, awaiting the call to arms” (O’Faolain 1961,

national language, the Gaelic-speaking population has steadily shrank since 1936, which can be interpreted as a form of civic dissent from hegemony. See the “Map of Irish Speakers 1851-1961” provided by R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (New York: Penguin), p. 517.

104). In its intricate relation to personal affect and history, the discourse of memory converges with storytelling in that it endows the past with an aura, or nostalgia encircling mere facts, to fulfill the teller's desire for plenitude. Translated into Walter Benjamin's observation on the origin of storytelling already quoted, this drive force toward wholeness is defined in relation to boredom which characterizes pre-modern rustic experience. Boredom, in other words, is aesthetically valued in Benjamin's model of classical storytelling in that it compels the listener to absorb the storyteller's tale, thus lending aura or plenitude to the story. This perspective, as I have suggested, is congenial to Daniel Corkery's nationalist agenda to de-historicize the Irish subject in order to homogenize national identity, a project paradoxically leading to the divesting of the Irish people of "abnormal" desire. For O'Faolain, however, boredom is not so much of an aesthetic matter as of psychic and political concerns. As an abnormal aspect of the cultural climate when Ireland moves from the madness of fanatic nationalism to the depersonalizing centralism of the bureaucratic state, it is both "a symptom and a technique of repression" (Deane 168), both the product and the accomplice of hegemony in the hybrid independent Irish state that is at once industrialized and rural, modern and yet refuses to progress (Hanson 102) with its "amorphism, unthinkingness, brainlessness, egalitarianism and . . . unsophistication" (qtd. in Moynahan 21). Desire, in such a context hostile to its gratification, is destined to be thwarted if it deviates from the norms. This may explain why Sarah Cotter, the female protagonist of this story, is oppressive by virtue of her infallible memory, much as a fundamentalist insistence on an Irish Ireland

has led to repressive hegemony. A handicapped single woman of twenty-five, she is modern provincial Ireland incarnate, a world paralyzed by cultural insularity, underdevelopment and "removal from history" (Deane 167). She knows the world by what she reads and what her friends tell her because she has never left her house in a small town of Ardagh for thirteen years, thereby always "trustingly retails something that did not happen, or not quite in that way," that is, something the person of that experience has forgotten for lack of desire as he or she progresses in life. As a consequence, her discourses become apocalyptic gossip in a small town which still retains the structure of a traditional community yet which demonstrates signs of boredom in the vacuousness of leisure characteristic of industrialized society: Devoid of desire for the experience she never partakes, her "invulnerable memory" of others' past is no less than "a Domesday Book of total recall" which "all Ardagh both enjoys and fears, and whose insistence can kill like the sirocco" (O'Faolain 1961, 104). Indeed her sister Mary, who lives alternately in Zurich and New York after she marries Richard Carton, an American businessman, chooses to visit her less often than she can when she stops over at Shannon, in order to flee from "the tireless whisper of the Recording Angel's Dictaphone" replaying every word passing between the two sisters (O'Faolain 1961, 105-6). For Mary the past always consists of feelings. As if to comply with an apothegm - a maxim she is quick to endorse - formulated by Stendhal that "True feeling leaves no memory" (O'Faolain 1961, 107), she even has a faulty memory which invariably proves self-contradictory upon Sarah's scrutiny. Probably out of respect for his wife's distress over Sarah's ruthless though guileless

exposure of Mary’s past totally foreign to herself, Richard also decides not to visit Ardagh again, even though he is immensely entertained by his “splendid Teller of Tales” of a sister-in-law who portrays a Mary he does not know when the couple stay with Sarah (O’Faolain 1961, 109). Mary is to follow suit after Sarah incidentally reminds her of Nathan Cash and Henry Beirne, Mary’s former lovers whose memory she has involuntarily suppressed after she imparts the affairs only partially to Sarah. The story concludes with Mary bidding farewell to Sarah on the pretext that her husband has given up his job, yet promises to visit her sister more often when Sarah implores her to stay. But the tearful Sarah knows better, though she resigns herself to Mary’s white lie eventually: “‘You’ll see me lots of times. Lots and lots of times.’ Behind her [Mary], Sarah said resignedly: ‘Will I, Mary?’” (O’Faolain 1961, 117) By choosing aphasia, Sarah registers the kind of boredom she is condemned to forever despite her previous attempt to flee from it through recounting others’ experiences. Memory, after all, is a curse rather than a blessing to her. For it dawns on her, perhaps for the first time of her life, that she has a memory of her own, which, like anyone else’s, reveals the foreignness of herself in the form of a desire for spiritual mobility. Ironically, while she is nostalgic for a past composed of intimate moments between the sisters, Mary has found them too unbearable to re-experience and opts for permanent exile instead. By portraying Sarah’s defeat, which is also a defeat of Irish cultural hegemony stemming from a fundamentalist adherence to the past to the repression of personal affects and history which constitute experience, O’Faolain once again reveals the hidden part of an Irish character entrapped by

internally generated boredom.

Interestingly, there is considerable overlap between Sarah and the narrator. While Sarah appropriates others' experiences to escape from boredom, the narrator also deviates from the role of its oral counterpart by recounting Sarah's narrative power and plight. Consequently, both divest the aura of their tales, rendering their accounts more akin to what Walter Benjamin calls the "mechanical reproduction" of the original experience. What is more, as Sarah lapses into aphasia, so the narrator relinquishes his voice toward the end of the story, as he often does in O'Faolain's later stories. In light of these parallels, the defeat of Sarah's narrative power can also be understood as the breakdown of storytelling to herald O'Faolain's move toward a modernist agenda in step with his desire for a modern nation.

The Failure of Storytelling

Fascinated by boredom, suggests Seamus Deane, many twentieth-century Irish writers not only represent monotony but also make a virtue of it by constantly referring the reader to the story of a writing (Deane 168), a writing practice coinciding with that of many modernist writers, including Marcel Proust. This observation sheds light on O'Faolain's fascination with writing memory in his later works, which are more concerned with private life at a time when repressive state policies, less poignantly felt in the 1960's and 1970's with their more liberal and even indifferent climate (Terence 1985, 243), had left an indelible imprint on the individual experience. The narrator of "I Remember! I Remember!" portrays Sarah Cotter as an

“inapt” storyteller not so much because she draws on others’ experience rather than her own as because she divests it of its aura. By contrast, his counterpart in “How to Write a Short Story” presents Morgan Myles as an amateur poet who aspires to write a short story out of Frank Breen’s abortive romance, but stops short for want of the “right” kind of aura in his subject matter. By positing an ideal listener who decides that he cannot make an interesting short story out of the tale he has just heard, O’Faolain moves from a preoccupation with the problematics of memory to its disarticulation, from a modernist interrogation of the desire for plenitude to a postmodernist parody of such an impossible desire, especially in a society as “thinly composed” (qtd. in Moynahan 20) as modern Ireland. Intending to “out-Maupassant Maupassant” (O’Faolain 1971, 186), Morgan, “our county librarian” (O’Faolain 1971, 185) as the narrator introduces him, wants to write a short story based on Frank’s past when he finds a photo of his sixty-year-old host as a beautiful lad of twelve. Declan Kiberd has delineated the lively interaction between the storyteller and his listener in the Irish countryside:

The tales were often told round the fireside of the «sg ealai» himself and folk from the surrounding countryside would crowd into his house to listen. Audiences were critical and not slow to correct a teller who stumbled and made a mistake. They loved to hear a familiar story again and again, having a deep admiration for the skill with which it was told. They became deeply involved in the plot, murmuring with apprehension or sighing with fear as the story progressed. (16)

Strikingly similar to this account, the scene by Frank’s fireplace

after a lavish dinner can be seen as a parody of storytelling. In it, the young librarian entreats his host to continue his tale, and even fills the gaps in the tale in his eagerness to draw out Frank's memory:

"Tell me about it," he [Morgan] ordered. "Tell me every single detail."

"There is nothing to it, or at rate, as I [Frank] now know, nothing abnormal. . . ." (O'Faolain 1971, 186)

"Look here, Frank! I want to get the background to all this. The telling detail, you know. . . . And where would ye meet? By the river. Or in the woods? 'Enter these enchanted woods ye who dare!'"

"No river. No woods. There was a sort of dirty old trunk room upstairs, under the roof, never used. . . ." (O'Faolain 1971, 190)

With Maupassant as his master, however, Morgan is more concerned with form and techniques rather than with content, and is hence quick to censor Frank's reminiscences wherever they threaten to diverge from his formula. In his impulse for normality, Morgan is reminiscent of Censorship Board officers who brought down many Irish modern classics in the early phase of the free state. Sexually orthodox as he is, he is doomed to be annoyed since Frank's affair with Bruiser was homosexual by nature - or at least as the teller understands it fifty years later - even though Frank was more overwhelmed than moved by Bruiser's brutal outbursts of illicit love at that time. Morgan's resistance to the alternative sexual economy explains why he wishfully reroutes Frank's account of his hazardous trysts with Bruiser to Maupassant's *An Idyll*, a story devoid of sexual implications even at the most erotic moment,

and dejectedly insists that "nothing happened" (O'Faolain 1971, 192) between Frank and Bruiser in spite of what he has heard. Indeed he is totally crushed upon learning how the graduating Bruiser raped his innocent younger lover after his farewell dinner. Still, he attempts to normalize the story when Frank tells him of the coda and three sequels to the story, but cannot generate enough zeal even though each of them was important to the teller, seemingly because they are too uneventful to fit in his writing scheme, but more probably because they once again challenge his fixed ideas about "normal" sexuality.

The most poignant irony arises when Frank recounts how, impotent after his rape, he made love with a worldly Austrian woman "like Trojans" after he has confessed his unspeakable romance at her gleeful instigation. In his recollection, the woman's pleas for narrative are uncannily as insistent as Morgan's: "'Tell me more, *mien Schäzzerl,*' she begged. 'Tell me everything! What exactly did he do to you? I want to know it all. This is *wunderbar*. Tell me! Oh do tell me!'" (O'Faolain 1971, 198). It turns out that the cathartic effect of this confession was tentative, for Breen eventually terminated this brief romance because he could not bear her ill temper. Embedded in a story-within-a-story, this anti-catharsis is triplicated since it not only dampens Morgan's revived hunger for a story which celebrates a holistic, heterosexual love to gratify his desire for "normal" sexuality, but compels Morgan to drop the idea of writing a short story altogether at the end of Frank's present confession. Instead, Morgan decides to turn Frank's story into a poem about a seashell entitled "The Curious Child," on the rationales that one always wants to "launch a boat in search of some far-off golden sands. And something or

somebody always holding us back” (O’Faolain 1971, 200), and that he serves art only: “For me there is only one fountain of truth, one beauty, one perfection. Art, Frank!. . .” (O’Faolain 1971, 201). Flattening Frank’s particular experience into an aestheticized, universal human condition, Morgan violates the listener’s protocol by usurping the storyteller’s place in order to reproduce an artifact almost totally foreign to the original story. In consequence, he unwittingly commits the pitfall of forgery, which he has accused Frank of, when the teller remarks that the discreet note Bruiser sent him to avoid censorship was insignificant because he could translate it any way he liked: “If that was all the damned fellow could say to you after that appalling experience, he was a character of no human significance whatever, a shallow creature, a mere agent, a catalyst, a cad. *The story becomes your own story*” (O’Faolain 1971, 196; italics mine). To this anti-purgative effect of storytelling, the doctor has to respond with another universalization, but only to be thrown to further recognition of his “strange” sexual orientation by Morgan’s “untimely verb”:

“Ah, well!” the doctor said, peering at him blankly.
 “As your friend Maupassant might have said, ‘*C’est la vie!*’”
 “*La vie!*” Morgan roared . . . “That trollop? She’s
 the one who always bitches up everything! . . . And bugger
la vie!” (O’Faolain 1971, 200-1)

In response, Frank has to conclude his articulation of memory with evasion, a form of aphasia similar to Sarah Cotter’s: “It is a view” (O’Faolain 1971, 201). For he must have understood by now that desire in one’s memory can never be fully shared by

someone who, not partaking that experience, is too deeply stranded in boredom and normality to face its strangeness, much as O'Faolain understands the failure of storytelling to retain the aura of the Irish past when, alienated from the original context, it is integrated into cultural hegemony.

And Again?: A Memoir of Disremembrance

Having problematized storytelling as the genesis of the short story, O'Faolain, not unlike Morgan though for a different reason, drops the short story to confront the foreignness of selfhood in memory in his last work, *And Again?*. In the form of James Joseph Younger's memoir, this novel begins with a note from the Secretary to the Department of External Affairs in Olympus addressed to him in 1965. In it, the Secretary invites the sixty-five-year-old Irish journalist to participate in an experiment designed by the gods to test whether humans learn from experience. As the object of study, Younger is to live backwards for sixty-five years, growing younger and younger, until he returns to the womb at the age of zero. As experience accumulates through memory, the gods have to put control on such a faculty to conduct the experiment: In his second life, Younger will have limited memory of the details in the previous life, but retain "all the fruits of [that] experience" (O'Faolain 1979, 8).

The experiment is soon under way as Younger walks out of his house, only to find himself greeted by a woman who he does not know, but who expresses condolence over his recent loss which he is totally unaware of. What is more, he is surprised to find himself speaking with an English accent. He then

realizes that he is not given a choice at all to decide whether he wants to be part of the experiment; instead, he is already on the birthday of his second life before he witnesses a car accident which, supposedly to kill him as the Secretary informs him, kills a little girl who, he learns later on, is his daughter in the previous life. What follows seems to confirm the divine presumption, that man barely learns from experience for lack of full memory, as Younger messes up one incestuous love affair after another, beginning with Ana French, her daughter Anador, and concluding with Ana's grand-daughter Nana, as he grows younger. Indeed he encounters numerous embarrassing situations, as his new lives get entangled with one another, in which people confront him with facts from his previous life he no longer remembers.

What redeems his sanity is Nana's love and full understanding. For it takes a holistic love which an ideal woman like Nana - a philosopher, a wife, a mother - is capable of to lift one out of the pain of encountering the foreignness within the self. It is she who deciphers the divine design after laborious brainwork over the jigsaw puzzle of information culled from innumerable rounds of cross-examination she conducts with Younger, candidly imparts this finding to her husband, and burdens herself with the pain of witnessing the strangeness of her husband as he progresses into his new life. In order to avoid the embarrassment of becoming the mother to a husband who is to turn into a child as years go by, she even dispatches Younger to the United States where he is to half-seriously court an American young woman named Christabel. Toward the end of the novel, she is alone to suffer the loss of her husband who returns home to become a baby before he

finally disappears into Time on his sixty-fifth birthday.

Interestingly, other than Younger's confidante, Nana's place in this novel is the collaborator of his memoir. She not only carries on her husband's account of his second life from his thirteenth year on, but inserts her corrections into it before she officially takes it over (O'Faolain 1979, 203-8). While Nana's impulse for editing a memoir can be legitimately attributed to her professional interest in differentiating facts from fantasy as a philosopher, it may not be as merely functional as it seems to be. For it is not a pure coincidence that Younger's memoir is dated 1965, one year after O'Faolain completed his autobiography *Vive Moi!*. Nor is it accidental that the note Younger receives in the beginning of the novel is sent from the Secretary of External Affairs in Olympus, for the tenet of gods' experiment lies in man's ability to reconcile with his own "foreignness," an aspect of the Irish nature O'Faolain has reiteratively explored in his short stories (Bonaccorso 38-39; 131). Given the overlap of art and life, Nana's comment on her husband's memoir should be more than fictional: "Everything he has written in his manuscript is a warning against the futility of writing a wholly truthful autobiography" (O'Faolain 1979, 278). Memory, after all, can be treacherous, much as there is always a foreign element within the self to resist totalization.

The same comment can be made of storytelling which, having inspired modern Irish writers immensely to uncover the hidden part of Ireland, ends up as a potentially oppressive instrument to repress the heterogeneous element of the Irish nature in the name of normalization. Still, the autobiographer, and his twin, the storyteller, is the most necessary of liars (Hildebilde 171), if only because he confronts normality and its

child, boredom, by celebrating a “multiplicity of mind” to lift one from the “madness of a homogeneous reality” (Harmon 184), and is thus most productive for all his failure. Aspiring to renovate the oral tradition to articulate a nostalgia for an Edenic Ireland which makes allowances for cultural diversity, O’Faolain ends up transcribing the foreignness of a “dreary Eden of suffocating enclosure and complacency” (Hildebidle 165), a hidden Ireland the grand narrative has induced and yet suppressed with its impulse for homogeneity. In an essay entitled “Romance and Realism,” O’Faolain suggests: “In twilight, in memory, in age, and in exile, Ireland is at her loveliest and most indubitable” (O’Faolain 1945, 37). As he puts Younger into permanent exile - a metaphor of the Irish character as “the exiles in the bloody world” (O’Faolain 1983, 425) - he permanently revokes his own chance for escape, a chance once available to him and still attracted him when he turned eighty (Julia O’Faolain 24). Instead, he surrenders himself to a peculiar form of aphasia, a speech failure revealing at once his (post)modernist sensibility and nostalgia for storytelling (Butler 1989, 76), to conclude his lifelong engagement with boredom induced by the nationalist longing for normality, the post-revolutionary Irish condition which has necessitated exile.

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「揉合記憶與慾望」：
形式、意識型態與歐惠倫作品中獨立後的愛爾蘭

林玉珍

摘 要

本文探討歐惠倫如何以和傳統說書形式類近的短篇小說，呈現獨立後的愛爾蘭。記憶乃為說書之本，只不過在說書時，記憶應屬中性，而在歐惠倫作品中，記憶即是意識型態，因為他以國族認同的小敘述，取代「純種愛爾蘭」的霸權言說。在早期作品中，他透過類似說書人的敘事者，發抒對愛爾蘭革命前國族一統的懷舊情緒；中期作品則著眼於對記憶本質的探討；晚期則藉由記憶與說書的挫敗，點出現代作家在呈現愛爾蘭特性中的異質時，所遭遇的困境。在最後作品中，他更以類自傳小說，描繪記憶衰退的創造性層面。原來自傳作者和說書人一樣，容或記憶失靈，但以其功在召回愛爾蘭民族性中隱抑的特質，卻可視為不可或缺的騙子。

關鍵詞：形式、意識型態、歐惠倫、獨立後的愛爾蘭